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All India Winner	VIVIAN ANDREWS	'Divyadaan', Salesian Institute of Philosophy	Nashik
Across all languages)			

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[to be filled in BLOCK LETTERS, signed by the participant, and securely attached to the essay]

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US ARE TINY MATTERS TO WHAT LIES WITHIN US" — RALPH WALDO
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"What lies before us and what lies after us are tiny matters to what lies within us."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Sir William Shakespeare once exclaimed, "What a work of art is man!" Rightly so, man is the masterpiece of the Artist of all artists. Why do I say this? I say it because the greatness and goodness of God and all His other attributes such as compassion, love, charity, peace, hope etc. are also present in man (though to a lesser degree). Astounding? unbelievable? It seems so if one takes a look at the current situation of humankind but it's true! If only we would care to look within, we would be surprised at the treasure we'd find.

Many, if not all schools of thought agree that man is more than just 'matter', more than just 'instinct'. Man is a conscious being and has the ability to be conscious of being a conscious being. I, for example know that I exist. A dog on the other hand exists but is not conscious of its existence.

Man can think, speculate and make contact with the beyond, with the transcendent, primarily because man has transcendence in him and this transcendence of man is given expression in things like prayer, meditation, religion, spirituality and so many aspects of man's daily life. Man as a rational being can transform a mere action into a reflective action, thus bringing meaning to life; meaning that is drawn from this transcendent aspect. The mind, the soul, the conscious, are all pointers to a greater noumenal reality in which man participates.

A human being has his/her own act of existing and is distinct, in the sense that two people are never the same. Two twins may look alike physically but are not the same persons.

Each person has a peculiarity of his own and can never be replaced by another. Only functional roles can be replaced but not persons. For example, after Sunil Chhetri gives up his functional role of the Indian football team, it will be taken over by another who will succeed him, but the person of Sunil Chhetri will not be replaced. Each one of us is truly one of a kind.

There is a tale that goes thus, a young man once came to an old sage who sat near a large forest and said to him, "O wise sage, I am in search of wealth, can you tell me where to find it?" "Go a little distance into the forest and you will find a copper mine and it will be yours", said the sage. The man did so, but later returned unsatisfied and said to the sage, "What if I go deeper into the forest?" "You will find a silver mine which will also be yours". "And if I still go farther?" "A goldmine", replied the sage and continued, "But you will never be satisfied by going farther in, stay here and I will teach you to go within".

The above fable has a lot to tell us about ourselves. How we degrade ourselves as human beings, searching for happiness in the 'without' or the 'external' which never seems enough, the demand is insatiable and always asks for "MORE!" However if we take a step back and reflect on what brings us true happiness, the answer is so clear that it stares one in the eye.

Alexander the Great, the Greek emperor wanted his funeral to be as follows, all his jewels to be strewn on the path, two holes in the coffin for his hands that would hang out empty. He wanted to demonstrate to those present that one takes nothing with him when he dies. All one takes is the 'SELF' that is, what we are 'WITHIN'.

Jesus of Nazareth would preach, "the Kingdom of God is within you" implying that it is our 'within-ness' where God meets us, where we find our true selves and our true place as human beings on the face of the earth. Recognising this 'within-ness' of man, our Indian tradition has a meaningful and profound greeting, the 'namasthe' or 'namaskāra', meaning 'hail to you', thus recognising the greatness and transcendence of man. Nowadays, too often we limit our greeting to wishing one a 'good morning' or a 'good evening', which is very shallow and neglects the fact that man is much more than the morning or evening that is limited by time and space and which passes away while man as a spiritual being does not.

Life's circumstances can be enhanced when we recognise the power within. There is this amazing phenomena of how thought guides action. I was recently asked to give a value talk at the inauguration of a school scouting year. Being naturally introverted, I was nervous coupled by the fact that it was the first time I would be addressing a school assembly. I prepared and rehearsed every word I was going to say. I read a few lines from an inspirational book which encouragingly said that, 'one gets what one expects'. If you expect to fail you may eventually fail. Keeping the maxim in mind and boosting myself up, I said a prayer and went on stage and delivered the talk very spontaneously as the thoughts flowed. The talk was appreciated by the principal of the school. I learnt a great deal from this experience. When you think positive, you bring what you think impossible into the realm of the possible. Things usually unfold as we expect them to. All we need to do is believe in ourselves and expect the best.

and the best is drawn out from within us, no matter what the outside situation.

Once we realise our greatness within, we can be a light to the world, to living and non-living beings. Justice, peace, social welfare, human rights, upliftment of the poor, ecological concerns etc. begin to develop as intrinsic attitudes in us. This inner ^{power} that creates conviction can accomplish great things and can even change the course of history. Mahatma Gandhi for example, led the Indian freedom struggle by this inner force which he called 'satya' (truth). This soul force overcame the powerful British empire. At the very sight of this force, swords and spears, bows and arrows, guns and bullets crumble to dust, hearts melt, enemies make peace and brothers reconcile. Such is the inner power we have within us which first transforms the self and never rests until it transforms the world around.

Living an authentic spiritual life, does have a positive effect on others. There is a story told of a traveler who went into the mountains and found an old wise woman and asked her for the precious gemstone she was wearing. Without any hesitation she gave it to the man and he went on his way but returned a month later saying, "here is the gemstone you gave me, I do not want it, give me what you have within you that enabled you to give it to me". You see, a life lived in truth from the power within is contagious!

A new world is possible; a new day is dawning on the horizon. Let us wake up and answer the call of life, let us recognise the immense power we have within us, a power which makes a truly human and transforms the

world around us by helping us to be good human beings and upright citizens. The tiny matters that lie before and behind us can be transformed by what lies within us.